

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 6, 2025

The Honorable Dorothy A. Fink, M.D.
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Acting Secretary Fink,

We are writing to express serious concerns regarding reports that Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grantees, such as Community Health Centers (health centers), continue to experience significant delays in accessing funding to support services, as well as restrictions on regular communications with agency staff as a result of the Trump Administration's January 20, 2025 executive orders to pause external communication from federal agencies, and subsequent memorandum directing all federal departments and agencies to freeze all financial assistance.¹

Community Health Centers provide high-quality primary and preventive care, dental care, behavioral health and substance use disorder services, and low-cost prescription drugs to more than 32 million Americans annually, serving one in five rural Americans and one in three people living in poverty.² Nationally, more than 1,400 health centers operate over 15,000 service sites across every state and Territory, employing more than 500,000 individuals and generating nearly \$85 billion in economic output.³

Despite the critical role health centers play in addressing health inequities, many centers struggle to keep up with the growing demand for services and rising costs to deliver high-quality care in their communities. While nearly 70 percent of health center revenue comes from payments from Medicaid, Medicare, commercial insurance, and self-pay patients, health centers rely on their regular federal grant funding to meet payroll obligations and keep their doors open.⁴ Beginning in late January, health centers started reporting issues accessing the Payment Management System (PMS) – getting “locked out”, being denied funding they had been awarded, and experiencing long delays in funding being released. As a result, health centers across the country

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-radical-and-wasteful-government-dei-programs-and-preferencing/>; <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/initial-rescissions-of-harmful-executive-orders-and-actions/>; <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/protecting-children-from-chemical-and-surgical-mutilation/>; <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/defending-women-from-gender-ideology-extremism-and-restoring-biological-truth-to-the-federal-government/>

² <https://www.nachc.org/resource/americas-health-centers-by-the-numbers/>

³ <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2024/aug/community-health-centers-meeting-primary-care-needs-2024-FQHC-survey>; <https://data.hrsa.gov/data/reports/datagrid?gridName=FQHCs>; [Economic-Impact-of-Community-Health-Centers-US_2023_final.pdf](#)

⁴ <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/community-health-center-patients-financing-and-services/>

are experiencing panic, unsure how to pay their staff and keep their doors open. Due to delays in funding, health centers have reported:

- “We have put off signing a contract to replace our mammography machine, which has reached end of life, because of this freeze and the uncertainty.”
- “I’m also now getting providers asking if they should be looking for a new job. Without any understanding and guidance, I’m pretty limited with how much I can actually assure them to do other than tighten our belts...”
- “Any services that are directly funded by federal funds will be placed on hold...”
- “We had to use all reserves in 2024. We will not make payroll or any other payments next week without access to this federal funding. Staff will be dismissed without access to federal funds.”
- “If everything stays the same...the best guess is that we could be fully operational for six months.”
- “We have the ability to sustain current or full operations for 60 days...Outreach and case management staff...would be in the first wave of layoffs. Unfortunately, those positions rely on federal support as they are typically not reimbursable through third-party payors. In a short period of time, this has had a profound impact on our staff. [Staff are] concerned that we will lose valuable staff members as they are concerned about the stability of the organization.”
- “We will step back on hiring and likely implement hiring pause unless this is resolved quickly.”
- “We have enough in reserve to cover two payroll periods.”
- “The pause in grant funding would create a deficit for us...We would likely need to start reducing staff and healthcare services to the...patients we serve...within the next couple of weeks if the freeze persists.”

As safety net providers operating on razor-thin margins, health centers need certainty to provide care in underserved communities. In Virginia alone, ongoing delays in accessing funding have caused health centers to close their doors and cancel patient appointments.⁵ When health centers close, people with chronic conditions miss appointments, pregnant women miss prenatal visits, and behavioral health services are interrupted, worsening outcomes and increasing costs to the entire health care system.

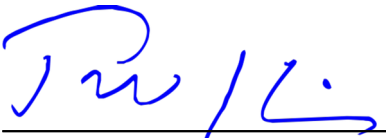
Despite a judge’s order blocking the funding freeze, we are troubled by reports that health centers are unable to access funding duly appropriated by Congress through the PMS. To compound this issue, our offices have heard troubling reports that since the Trump Administration’s executive orders and funding freeze, funding that has already been appropriated and directed by Congress is still being restricted, and standing webinars, briefings, and meetings are being cancelled at the last minute. Health centers are receiving little communication regarding these cancellations and changes, and the communication they have received from HRSA has been unclear, directing actions that may conflict with current court orders.

⁵ <https://www.vpm.org/news/2025-02-04/virginia-community-health-centers-close-federal-funding-grant-access>

We request that you provide answers to the following questions in writing no later than Wednesday, February 12, 2025.

1. How many health centers have draw-down requests pending in the PMS?
 - a. How has that number changed, daily, since January 27, 2025?
 - b. What is the average wait time from submission of a draw-down request to disbursement of funds prior to January 27, 2025 and after January 27, 2025?
2. How many health center draw-down requests have been denied since January 27, 2025?
 - a. What is the rationale for these denials?
3. What is the exact timeline for ensuring the PMS is fully operational and disbursing all pending health center draw-down requests?
4. What specific authority and under which executive action did HRSA or the Department of Health and Human Services use to restrict health center access to the PMS and funding that they had been previously awarded?
5. Please provide a list of regular standing calls or meetings between HRSA staff and HRSA grantees that have been cancelled since January 20, 2025. Please include the following:
 - a. A description of the grantees impacted, including the type of grantees and number of grantees.
 - b. Whether funds appropriated by Congress for the purpose of the grant are being withheld from being awarded to the grantees.
6. Please provide a list of webinars, briefings, information sessions, and trainings that have been cancelled since January 20, 2025. Please include the following:
 - a. A description of the purpose of each webinar, briefing, information session, or training.
 - b. Whether or not the webinar, briefing, information session, or training is required by statute and if so, provide the corresponding citation.

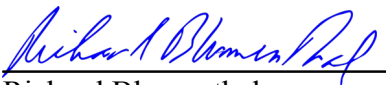
Sincerely,



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



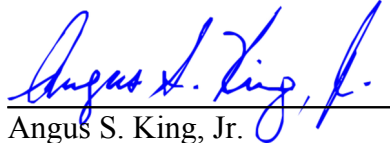
Lisa Blunt Rochester
United States Senator



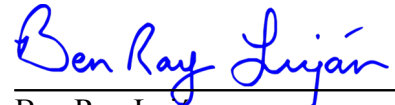
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



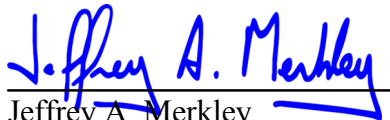
John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



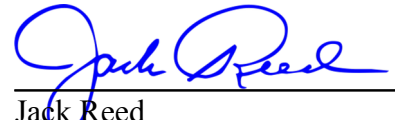
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



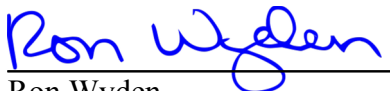
Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



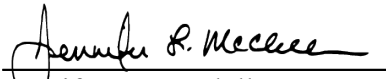
Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress





Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

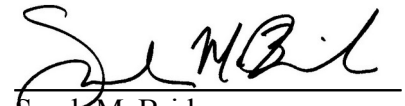


Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress


Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress


Eugene Simon Vindman
Member of Congress


Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress


Sarah McBride
Member of Congress

cc: Diana Espinosa, Principal Deputy Administrator, Health Resources and Services Administration